



Elton Mayo: The Humanist Temper

Richard Trahair

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The definitive biography of the life and work of Elton Mayo (1880-1949) is the first full, accurate account of the activities and intimate life of one of Australia and America's pioneering social scientists. Mayo, who established the scientific study of organizational behavior, was highly influential in American social science and business management theory, following his work at the Harvard Business School and the Western Electric Company.

Still the subject of vigorous debate, Mayo's ideas spanned several disciplines--psychology, sociology, philosophy, and business management. Mayo developed the field of industrial psychology by applying the results of scientific research to the problems of work in order to improve the life of industrial workers and managers and to encourage collaboration between administrators and their subordinates. Trahair's biography traces the origins of Mayo's ideas in order to help clarify aspects of the debate.

Alfred W. Clark of La Trobe University commented, "It will become a definitive biography...it is based on a masterly grasp of detail into Mayo's life, theories and impact.... Trahair's expression is always clear and lively; he never writes a turgid sentence, let alone a paragraph"; while Arthur G. Bedeian at Auburn University noted that *Elton Mayo A Humanist Temper* is "laced with wit and insight, and graced with style. For all its scholarship, it is wholly readable. Historians interested in the development of the social sciences should find the book particularly valuable. It offers a searching example of the scientific enterprise."

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